



News Release

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West Nile virus detected in mosquito samples collected in Yakima County

Tests find the virus in our state earlier than usual — first positive samples this year

OLYMPIA — Mosquitoes in two samples collected in Yakima County have tested positive for West Nile virus — almost a month earlier than in previous years. These results are the first sign that the virus is active in Washington this year. Testing mosquito samples and dead birds for West Nile virus began just last week across the state.

“Avoiding mosquito bites is the key to preventing infection and possible illness,” said Maryanne Guichard, assistant secretary of Environmental Public Health. “Many people will be outdoors now with the warmer weather, so it’s important to take steps to prevent West Nile virus.”

People who spend time outdoors should use bug repellent with DEET, picaridin, or IR 3535; some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products provide long-lasting protection against mosquito bites. Wearing long pants and long sleeve shirts when outdoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active is another helpful strategy.

Getting rid of standing or stagnant water from cans, flower pots, buckets, and other containers reduces mosquito habitat around homes and businesses where mosquitoes can breed. Changing water in birdbaths, wading pools, and pet dishes at least twice a week will discourage them from taking up residence. Make sure window and door screens are “bug tight,” or replace them.

Washington residents are encouraged to use the Department of Health’s online reporting system to [report dead birds](#). Often, dead birds are the first sign that [West Nile virus](#) is circulating in a community.

Most people bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus won’t become ill, yet some may have mild symptoms including headache and fever that go away without treatment. For some people, West

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Nile virus infection can be very serious, and even fatal. Severe disease can include meningitis or encephalitis. Some neurological effects of the disease may be permanent. People over 50 and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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